

Remarks

I. Status of claims

Claims 1-6 and 8-57 were pending.

Claim 22 has been canceled without prejudice.

II. Claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-6, 8-21, and 23-57 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Al-Hussein (US 5,818,978) in view of Luther (US 6,449,065).

Independent claim 1 has been amended and now recites:

1. A method of processing an image of elements, comprising:
assigning each of multiple ones of the elements a respective element label selected from a set of at least three element labels that includes at least one edge element label;
grouping spatially connected ones of the elements into respective blobs based on the element labels assigned to the elements, wherein each of the blobs is assigned a respective one of at least two blob labels; and
processing ones of the elements based at least in part on the blob labels assigned to the blobs and the element labels assigned to the elements.

Neither Al-Hussein nor Luther discloses or suggests “a assigning each of multiple ones of the elements a respective element label selected from a set of at least three element labels that includes at least one edge element label.” Indeed, neither reference even hints that any of the pixels of the processed image is assigned an edge element label. The Examiner has taken the position that Al-Hussein discloses characterizing image elements according to an edge in col. 2, lines 25-32 (see page 3, lines 5-7, of the Office action). In the cited disclosure, however, Al-Hussein merely states that scanning artifacts might cause gray-scale values to be assigned to pixels at the edges of characters. The cited disclosure would not have led one skilled in the art to assign “each of multiple ones of the elements a respective element label selected from a set of at least three element labels that includes at least one edge element label.” Indeed, this disclosure

does not even hint that pixels at characters edges are detected, much less anything about labeling such pixels with an edge element label.

In addition, neither Al-Hussein nor Luther discloses or suggests "grouping spatially connected ones of the elements into respective blobs based on the labels assigned to the elements" where the element labels are "selected from a set of at least three element labels that includes at least one edge element label," as now recited in claim 1. Instead, both Al-Hussein and Luther perform a connected components analysis based on a bi-level image in which each of the pixel is assigned either a black pixel label or a white pixel label (see, e.g., col. 18, line 18 - col. 19, line 15, of Al-Hussein, and col. 10, lines 31-67, of Luther).

For at least these reasons, the rejection of independent claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Al-Hussein in view of Luther now should be withdrawn.

Each of claims 2-6, 8-21, and 23-57 incorporates the elements of independent claim 1 and therefore is patentable over Al-Hussein and Luther for at least the same reasons explained above.

III. Conclusion

For the reasons explained above, all of the pending claims are now in condition for allowance and should be allowed.

Charge any excess fees or apply any credits to Deposit Account No. 08-2025.

Respectfully submitted,

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